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Viewing cable 06CAIRO2162, CAIRO: SCENESETTER FOR UNDER SECRETARY JOSEPH

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06CAIRO2162**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06CAIRO2162	2006-04-09 14:27	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Cairo

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9135>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9164>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9146>
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<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10073>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10185>

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INFO RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE 0135

RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE 0235

RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 0639

S E C R E T CAIRO 002162

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [UNSC](#) [EG](#) [IR](#) [KNNP](#)

SUBJECT: CAIRO: SCENESETTER FOR UNDER SECRETARY JOSEPH

Classified By: DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Embassy Cairo warmly welcomes your visit and the opportunity to continue our dialogue with the GOE on counterproliferation, Iran, and security assistance. Egypt values its role as a regional leader on nonproliferation and its influence in multilateral fora. Your visit will reassure Egypt that the U.S. values its regional influence and may also highlight areas for greater cooperation. The Foreign and Defense Ministers will likely tell you that the GOE: shares U.S. concerns on Iran's nuclear intentions; wants to keep Israel's nuclear program on the agenda to address at the earliest appropriate opportunity; is not ready to endorse PSI; and fears Congress may reduce or redirect U.S. security assistance to Egypt.

Your interlocutors

12. (C) You will meet both the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs. Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit previously served as Egypt's representative to the UN (1999-2004) and is proud and protective of Egypt's role in multilateral fora. He has become increasingly involved in nonproliferation as a result of the developments in Iran, and remains keenly focused on the creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (MENWFZ). Defense Minister Field Marshal Tantawi is reluctant to engage on sensitive issues such as counterproliferation, but will do so when pressed. Preserving the USD 1.3 billion in annual U.S. military assistance is Tantawi's number one priority, and you should expect him to stress this during your meeting.

Iran

13. (S) USG officials have briefed the GOE on three separate occasions on our assessment of Iran's nuclear aims and weaponization capabilities. Following each briefing, GOE officials, including Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, have said they are convinced of the USG's assessment, but seek more clarity on when Iran will develop nuclear weapons. Because of our consultations, Egypt supported the IAEA decision to report Iran to the UNSC. Egypt's antipathy towards Iran in general is intense, and Egyptians are increasingly concerned about Iran's regional influence, particularly in Iraq, and its support for Hamas. A senior GOE official recently warned a visiting USG official against any U.S. engagement with Iran. That said, any discussion of Iran's nuclear file inevitably leads to Egyptian charges of the U.S.' "Double Standard" on Israeli nukes.

MENWFZ

14. (C) Aboul Gheit wants to advance the discussion on the MENWFZ, but understands the impediments to progress. Nonetheless, he will remind you that this issue is still on his agenda and on the minds of the Egyptian people, and he will press for more U.S. support for President Mubarak's initiative.

Proliferation Security Initiative

15. (S) As previously reported, Egypt is not yet ready to endorse PSI's statement of the Principles of Interdiction. During a recent meeting with the Ambassador, the DefMin explained that raising the profile of U.S.-Egyptian counterproliferation support through a public endorsement of PSI could harm our governments' currently excellent cooperation. Tantawi also reminded the Ambassador of the cases in which Egypt interdicted ships at USG request. After reassuring the Ambassador that Egypt would continue to support (quietly) the U.S. on counterproliferation, Tantawi asked that the USG not press Egypt on PSI. Separately, an MFA Disarmament official recently asked if a government can join PSI in "observer status" and said that the Ministry is coordinating a National Committee meeting to discuss the initiative. But we expect MoD representatives at that meeting to oppose endorsement of PSI.

Military Assistance

16. (C) President Mubarak regards the USD 1.3 billion in military assistance to Egypt as the keystone of the U.S.-Egyptian strategic relationship. Because of Egypt's support for U.S. regional objectives, such as on Iran, the Peace Process, Hamas, counterproliferation, and Sudan, the GOE believes that Congressional discussions about reducing or redirecting any portion of this assistance are inappropriate.

GOE officials have said that any change would signal a downgrade in the relationship and may impact cooperation in key areas. These officials have also said that, on a practical level, reducing military assistance would force them to look elsewhere (i.e, Russia and China) for less expensive military equipment. We have advised the GOE that they bear responsibility for convincing Congress of Egypt's value to the U.S, but the GOE believes the U.S. should press Congress harder to ensure continued FMF support for Egypt. NEA A/S Welch recently suggested to Tantawi that Egypt send troops to support a UN mission in Darfur, and Tantawi promised to raise the matter with Mubarak. (Note: The issue of sending Egyptian troops to Darfur has been historically sensitive. Thus far, Egypt has sent only a small number of observers and a field hospital to Darfur. End note.) You may want to follow up on this suggestion during your meeting with Tantawi.

Domestic Politics

17. (C) President Mubarak recently told Egyptian newspaper editors that his January meeting with Vice President Cheney and his February meeting with Secretary Rice indicated that the USG was satisfied with Egypt's reform process. This is not the case. The GOE is proceeding with its economic reform agenda, centered on an ambitious plan to create 4.5 million jobs over the next six years, but few concrete results on political reform have been observed thus far. The parliamentary elections in 2005 went badly, and postponement of local council elections until 2008 suggests that the GOE leadership is moving cautiously. The February 3 Red Sea ferry accident and the avian influenza crisis (11 human cases thus far) have also pushed the GOE into a defensive crouch. The opposition bloc in the new Parliament, which includes 88 independent deputies affiliated with the banned but tolerated Muslim Brotherhood, has kept up a steady stream of criticism of the GOE. Secular opposition activist Ayman Nour, who placed a distant second to Mubarak in the September 2005 presidential elections, remains in prison after his December 24, 2005 conviction on politically-motivated forgery charges. Nour's appeal before Egypt's highest court will be heard on May 18. Both Aboul Gheit and Tantawi will tell you that internal reform is underway and will continue to proceed at a pace appropriate for Egypt.

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